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update

Vol. 4, no. 25, 9 December 1991
Published by the Division of Public Affairs, United Nations Development Programme, One UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017

news & events

Windhoek. Planning ministers of 44 African countries, UNDP resident representatives in Africa, other top UN officials in Africa and representatives of African intergovernmental organizations met here for three days to chart future development plans for the continent. The joint meeting, which convened on 25 November, was sponsored by UNDP and the Economic Commission for Africa.

A broad range of issues was discussed, including long-term development strategies, environment and development, and the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on African societies and economies. Among the other topics addressed was the role of planning in a market economy, with the Republic of Korea held up as a market planning example. Planning ministers endorsed the specifics of UNDP's regional programme in Africa. However, they urged UNDP to focus more of its assistance on achieving regional economic integration to help Africa compete in the world trade market.

"The challenge of economic transformation and sustainable development, which Africa now faces, is enormous," William H. Draper III, UNDP's Administrator, told participants. "This is complicated by a crushing debt burden of over US$280 billion, which stifles the growth of the poorest nations. Yet more than 30 countries in the region have already embarked on radical economic reforms and often painful structural adjustments.

"UNDP will do all it can to help countries alleviate the human distress that often accompanies such adjustments, and to develop the long-term strategies needed for sustainable growth."

Mr. Draper also said that Africa was UNDP's number one priority. He noted that sub-Saharan Africa will receive over half of all UNDP's core resources in the next five years. That amounts to more than $1.5 billion.

Windhoek. The HIV epidemic was one of the most urgent topics discussed at the joint meeting of UNDP and African planning ministers. Dr. Michael Merson, director of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Programme on AIDS, said that by June 1991 there were eight to ten million adults and one million children infected with HIV worldwide. These numbers resulted in one million adult AIDS cases and 500,000 paediatric cases. About two-thirds of the infections occurred in sub-Saharan Africa.

In an effort to encourage planners to set up HIV/AIDS commissions in their own countries, UNDP Administrator William H. Draper III stressed the impact of AIDS on development. "AIDS is not only a health problem. It is perhaps *the* most serious threat to development in Africa," said Mr. Draper. He added that without a concerted effort to combat the spread of the virus, "all of the gains made over the past half century could be wiped out in one generation."

UNDP has spent more than $8 million over the past five years on AIDS-related projects, and will spend more over the next five years on programmes to support activities in the field, including the training of managers, farmers, teachers and health care workers.

At the Windhoek meeting on 27 November, in anticipation of World AIDS Day, Mr. Draper released a UNDP policy statement on HIV/AIDS in the workplace. It commits UNDP to instituting a supportive and non-discriminatory personnel strategy that includes extensive education and training.

Mr. Draper said that an increasing number of UNDP offices have staff members who are infected with the virus or have sick family members. Some staff have already died. "We urgently need to put in place personnel policies and practices that will enable us to best face this epidemic and

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continue to work in a productive manner," said Mr. Draper.

São Paulo. A group of Latin American metropolitan mayors sought solutions to waste management problems at a five-day conference that convened on 11 November. The conference was part of REMAI '91, a series of seminars and exhibits designed to highlight the solid waste challenge in Latin America and to help countries prepare for the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development. UNDP is one of the main sponsors of REMAI '91.

The goal of the November conference was to promote regional cooperation among various Latin American governments, non-governmental organizations, businessmen and technical and scientific associations. Seminars were held to discuss topics including recycling and new developments in household, hospital and industrial waste disposal. The meeting was also the site of an exhibit that included displays on new pollution control equipment and programmes used to analyze environmental accident risks.

Bangkok. A preparatory meeting for the Asia-Pacific Forum on Economic Management and Reform will be held at the United Nations Building in Bangkok on 12-13 December. The Forum itself which will be launched in early 1992 will bring together top policy makers from the region to exchange information and views on economic management.

The idea for a series of Forums originated in May 1990 in Hawaii, at a Symposium on Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific, launched under the sponsorship of UNDP and the Institute of Economic Development and Policy of the East-West Center. Senior government officials and heads of research institutes in the region had stressed the need for informal exchanges among prominent policy makers. They urged the creation of periodic Forums to promote sustainable economic development throughout the region, with emphasis on such issues as trade, finance and investment.

Kathmandu. The third intergovernmental meeting on the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) was held here on 1-6 December to reflect on the organization's contributions and discuss future goals.

The UNV programme was established by the General Assembly 20 years ago under the administrative aegis of UNDP. It grew from 15 volunteers in 1971 to over 2,000 specialists and field workers in 1991. Most UNV work has been in landlocked, island or least developed countries. About 50 per cent of the volunteers have worked in Africa, 30 percent in Asia and the rest in Central America, the Caribbean and the non-OPEC Middle East. They have worked mostly in the areas of health, education and agriculture.

The six-day meeting assessed the contributions of the UNV programme as well as obstacles it faces. Participants looked at ways in which the organization can change the perception that UN volunteers are inexperienced and unskilled. They also discussed means of getting more young people involved in volunteer work on a national level, and strengthening UNV's role among community groups combating the HIV epidemic.

New York. UNDP has approved $2.6 million to fund the construction of 2,800 low-cost bamboo houses in Costa Rica. More than 530 homes have already been built under an earlier phase of the project. The new homes are expected to benefit 12,000 low-income Costa Ricans, mainly in the rural areas of the country.

Traditionally, government housing programmes have tended to address the needs of city dwellers, even though 53 per cent of Costa Rica's population is rural. These houses were usually built out of steel and other expensive construction materials, and were too costly for low-income families.

In cooperation with the Government of Costa Rica, UNDP launched a pilot programme in 1987 to build homes from bamboo, which cut construction costs by 25 per cent. More than half of the homes to be built under the second phase of the project will benefit households headed by women. The project will also provide training to help community members learn how to farm the bamboo and to build furniture from the material for commercial and domestic use.

Washington, D.C. The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) celebrated its 20th anniversary last month. It was founded in 1971 with support from governments, private foundations, UNDP, the World Bank, and the Food and Agriculture Organization

of the UN. A partnership of bilateral, multilateral and private agencies, CGIAR was organized to mobilize resources for existing agricultural research centres. The aim was to avert the threat of famine in the developing world.

With a network of 16 international agricultural research centres, CGIAR supports studies to increase crop yields, strengthen management of natural resources, improve food and agriculture policies and build links between national and global agricultural research centres. More than 1,700 senior scientists from 60 countries are engaged in research through CGIAR's network. More than 45,000 agricultural researchers have been trained at its centres.

projects endorsed by the action committee

(all projects subject to modification; sums quoted in US dollars)

6 November 1991

Saudi Arabia. This project seeks to ensure an efficient and reliable civil aviation system that will meet the growing needs of 24 airports in the country. UNDP assistance includes completing construction of the King Fahd International Airport and upgrading airports in the southern provinces of Jizan and Ahba. Advisers will be provided in the areas of airport engineering and maintenance, air traffic services, airport security, air transport economics, aviation revenue management and aviation legislation. Special attention will be given to developing a long-term training plan for aviation personnel. Funds of $15,970,100 from government cost-sharing are to pay for a project manager, experts and consultancy services, subcontracts for a training survey and management training seminars. Executed by the International Civil Aviation Organization and implemented by the Presidency of Civil Aviation. (SAU/91/004)

Tanzania. In recent years, the demand for rice in Zanzibar in recent years has surpassed local production. As a result, most rice consumed on the island is now imported. UNDP has been helping small farmers to develop irrigated areas for rice production. The aim is to boost yields and reduce costly imports. This follow-up phase will focus on training small farmers in maintaining a network of irrigation systems set up in an earlier phase. Other objectives include the rehabilitation of existing irrigation systems and institutional capacity building. Proposed UNDP contribution: $1,154,080 for an irrigation engineer, a UN Volunteer (UNV), an agricultural economist, fellowships and study tours for 20 local staff. Executed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Natural Resources. (URT/90/017)

Regional project:

Asia and the Pacific. The Tumen River, which flows into the Sea of Japan, forms the boundaries of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Soviet Union. Its geographic location and abundance of natural resources are of strategic importance for economic development. This valuable economic potential will benefit coastal countries in the Northeast Asian region, including landlocked Mongolia. At a July meeting chaired by UNDP in Ulaanbaatar, a broad programme of assistance was envisaged for the region.

Preliminary studies were initiated and a programming review meeting was held in Pyongyang in October. Governments reconfirmed their commitment toward economic cooperation and established an action plan for the first 18 months. Participating governments agreed to form a Programme Management Committee under the auspices of UNDP.

Following recommendations made at the Pyongyang meeting, a project will be developed. This preparatory phase will support feasibility studies of projects in such areas as navigation, port facilities, land transportation systems and environmental protection. Collected data will be used to finalize a programme document for the development of the Tumen River basin. The document will be presented at a meeting of the Programme Management Committee in January next year.The project will also include international trade

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and investment promotion activities.

Proposed UNDP contribution: $825,000 for a programme manager, consulting services in macro-economics, transit and trade, engineering and legal matters, study tours and data collection. Executed by UNDP's Office for Project Services (UNDP/OPS) and implemented by the Programme Management Committee of participating governments. (RAS/92/430)

30 October 1991

Burkina Faso. Boosting crop yields and livestock production remains a top priority for Burkina Faso to attain food self-sufficiency. To achieve this aim, the UN Capital Development Fund helped launch a rural development drive for the provinces of BAM, Sanmatenga and Namentega, located in the central-northern region. UNDP will provide technical assistance to strengthen the Regional Center for Agropastoral Promotion. Training programmes for young farmers and extension workers will be upgraded. Emphasis will be placed on improving basic infrastructure such as rehabilitation and maintenance of small dams and irrigation works. The proposed project will also introduce soil conservation techniques and offer horticulture training to women. Assistance is expected to increase the skills of rural inhabitants to sustain community self-help ventures.

Proposed UNDP contribution: $1,799,122 for consultants, UNVs, subcontract for training through non-governmental organizations and support staff. Government-executed and implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. Proposed cooperating agency: FAO. (BKF/87/017)

Editor's Note. UPDATE will not be published on 23 December 1991. The next issue will appear on 13 January 1992.

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